

Mud Creek Natural Borders Dog Park at East Patchogue
Pilot Project

August 12, 2009

This is a site located in the hamlet of East Patchogue on the east side of Roe Avenue at its southern terminus with the Great South Bay. The eastern side of this parkland fronts on Mud Creek and its south side fronts on the Great South Bay.

A significant portion of the parcel is unvegetated, open land comprised of sand with some gravel and sea shell fragments. A large berm is located along the western border of the property and is vegetated in most locations. Part of the site was previously utilized as a dredge material disposal area which provides some of the rationale for the lack of vegetation on a substantial portion of the site. Other portions of the site contain isolated areas of vegetation comprised of species found in terrestrial successional communities or in maritime and tidally-influenced locations. Tidal wetlands vegetation is found along the eastern fringe of the parcel while a large section of contiguous natural vegetation is found in the northern section of the site. On one or two occasions in the past ten years, certain species of rare colonial waterbirds demonstrated some attempts to establish nests on the Great South Bay shorefront but there have been no documented cases of colonial waterbird nesting since that time.

In 2007, the Suffolk County Legislature adopted a resolution which required the County Parks Department to ensure that at least some of the new dog parks it established were natural borders dog parks instead of those defined by fencing or other substantial and continuous human-created barrier. After considerable review of its inventory of parkland; review of environmental, planning, community, financial, logistical and constraints and restrictions imposed by the origin of the funding which led to the acquisition of certain parkland, the Parks Department determined that this parcel was one which appeared to be suitable for consideration as a natural borders dog park. The Parks Department has also received input regarding this site from dog park advocates and certain members of the community. In addition, the Parks Department has met with the Town of Brookhaven in regard to this site.

Accordingly, the Parks Department proposes to establish the Mud Creek site as a pilot natural borders dog park subject to the following parameters:

1. The proposed pilot natural borders dog park shall be open for use by off-leash dogs from September 1 to March 1 of any given year. The dog park shall be closed for use by off-leash dogs from March 2 through June 30 of any given year in order to ensure the protection and prevent harassment of any colonial waterbirds which are actively attempting to nest on the site.

During the period of March 2 through June 30, County Parks Department staff shall be actively monitoring the site to determine whether or not colonial

waterbirds are actively nesting, attempting to nest or have successfully established nests on the site. If Parks Department staff verify the presence of such activity, the site shall be closed to use by off-leash dogs until such time that these birds and their potential offspring have left the site.

During the period of March 2 through June 30, if Parks Department staff verify that colonial waterbirds are not actively nesting, attempting to nest or have successfully established nests on the site, the site will be opened to use by off-leash dogs from July 1 through September 1 of that particular year, in addition to being open from September 1 through March 1 of the following year.

2. Appropriate signs, similar to those used at the County's existing dog parks, will be installed at entry points along Roe Avenue. The signs will post the rules and regulations regarding use by off-leash dogs. Signs would also note that the park would only be open from dawn to dusk.
3. Roe Avenue is a Town road. Currently, on-street parking is permitted during the daytime hours adjacent to the proposed dog park. Accordingly, no off-street parking area will be created within the confines of the park as it appears that ample parking currently exists on the street.

However, should on-street parking become such an issue that the Town decides to ban it altogether, if necessary and as an alternative, the Parks Department will construct an off-street parking area for up to 10 vehicles. The southern boundary of the parking area would be located approximately 100 feet north of the Mean High Water mark (tidal wetlands boundary) on the beach to the south. The entrance to the parking area would be cut through the existing berm and the parking area surface graded and then underlain by "State Blend" RCA. Substantial bollards comprised of sections of utility poles (as well as similar materials) would be installed in the ground around the perimeter of the parking area to prevent access to the greater park area by ATVs and FWDs as well as to minimize dumping. If the alternative parking area were deemed necessary, the Parks Department would apply to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for the necessary regulatory permits.

4. Areas of existing natural and sensitive vegetation will be cordoned off and protected by snowfencing. In addition snowfencing will be extended from east to west across the middle of the property to limit off-leash dog use to the southern portion of the site. An area in the extreme southeast part of the site, which contains the remains of a timber jetty, will be cordoned off with snowfencing for safety reasons.
5. No sources of potable water will be provided. Patrons will need to transport and provide their own water.

6. No trash receptacles will be provided at the natural borders dog park. Dog park patrons will be required to clean up their dog's waste, remove it from the park site, transport it off premises and dispose of it properly. (Trash receptacles, especially in remote locations, can become a disposal site for undesirable materials such as used motor oil and household waste and can become a problem to actively maintain when no park personnel are stationed at a site.)
7. The use of this site as a natural borders dog park will be conducted as a trial/pilot project from its inception in 2009 until March 1, 2010. Its use will be monitored during this period and data and information collected. During the following spring, this information will be used to evaluate the pilot natural borders dog park and determine whether or not adjustments and refinements need to be made in the following season of use or even whether or not the natural borders dog park should be terminated and the area restored to its prior condition.

Failure of dog owners to clean up after their dogs, excessive littering, sustained failure to obey Parks Department rules and regulations, damage to existing vegetation or similar violations will be deemed grounds for termination of this pilot program and cessation of all off-leash dog activities at the site.

8. The Parks Department will have ultimate authority and operational flexibility to decide whether or not to open and allow utilization of the pilot off-leash dog park at any time. The Parks Department will have the authority to close the pilot off-leash dog park at any time determined to be necessary.